Device Safety

Don't make a splash

AVOID INJURIES FROM LIQUID CHEMICAL DISINFECTANTS.

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WHILE REMOVING A SURGICAL INSTRUMENT FROM A container of glutaraldehyde-based disinfectant, a nurse lost her grip on the instrument and dropped it back into the solution. The disinfectant splashed under her glasses and into her eyes. Although she imgated her eyes for 15 minutes, she developed corneal keratitis.

What went wrong?

The nurse in the above scenario wasn't wearing the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) recommended by the product manufacturer. Liquid chemical disinfectants/sterilants (LCDIS) and their fumes are dangerous and need careful handling according to manufacturers' instructions for use and Occupational Safety and Health Administration guidelines.

What precautions can you take?

- Don't take shortcuts. Always wear appropriate PPE when working with these products. This includes splashproof goggles or full face shields, gloves impervious to the LCDIS, and aprons, gowns, and in some situations, ventilators designed for use with chemicals.
- Review the Material Safety and Data Sheets (MSDS) for the LCDIS used at your facility; MSDS provide the proper procedures for working with these chemicals. If your facility doesn't have MSDS, you can get them from the product manufacturer or on the Internet at ***hftp://www.cdc.gov/niosh/npg/npg.html.***
- Make sure emergency care procedures are displayed in areas where LCDIS are used and stored.

If you have questions regarding the safe handling or use of these products, contact the manufacturer and refer to professional practice guidelines. One valuable document is "Safe Use and Handling of Glutaraldehyde-Based Products in Health Care Facilities." It's available by calling the Association for the Advancement of Medical Instrumentation at 703-525-4890, ext. 217.

As a front-line worker, you may be among the first to recognize a device safety problem. Reporting the information to MedWatch helps the Food and Drug Administration address device-related public health concerns.

Although you need to support the adverse event–reporting policy of your health care facility, you may voluntarily report a medical device that doesn't perform as intended by calling MedWatch at 1-800-FDA-1088 (fax: 1-800-FDA-0178). The opinions and statements contained in this report are those of the author and may not reflect the views of the Department of Health and Human Services. Device *Safety* is coordinated by Chris Parmentier, RN.